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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000879

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E NATSIOS, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

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SUBJECT: SPLM LEADERSHIP TO DEFINE TASKFORCE, SUPPORT
ASMARA TALKS

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Classified By: CDA R. Powers, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

SPLM Organizing for Darfur Meeting

11. (C) Discussions continue within the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) on the structure and focus of its role in the Darfur political process. Meeting with AID Mission Director and Poloff on June 3, SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amun said that the party recognized that resolution of the Darfur conflict was essential prior to the 2009 elections, adding, "if not, it will be the end of Sudan." However, Amun explained that the movement needed a clear set of objectives and targets for the proposed meeting in Southern Sudan and clear "boundaries" for the SPLM Taskforce for Darfur. Amun said that he had instructed Taskforce Chairman Clement Janda to present a proposal to the SPLM senior leadership, which would begin continuous engagement with the Taskforce to "give it direction." He said that the National Congress Party (NCP) supported the SPLM's role in the process, viewing the SPLM "as the least worst of all the devils that exist."

12. (C) The senior leadership of the SPLM maintains that its meeting in Southern Sudan would concentrate on preparing the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) non-signatories for negotiations. Such preparations would include a clear message that the basis for the political process must be the DPA. The SPLM would work with the non-signatory political leaders and field commanders to develop positions on the most critical issues, such as compensation and power sharing. "The SPLM should not be a mediator," said Amun. "It should be a facilitator." (Comment: Amun's view of the SPLM's role mirrors that of First Vice President Salva Kiir, Minister in the Office of the President of the Government of Southern Sudan Luka Biong Deng, and Minister of Cabinet Affairs Deng Alor. Though these proposals for the conference in Southern Sudan are more modest than those put forth by some SPLM Taskforce members--which include reconciliation between Arab and African tribes and workshops for Darfur civil society activists--the senior leadership's views will likely prevail. End comment.)

Talks in Asmara?

13. (C) Amun emphasized that the regional actors in the Darfur

conflict--particularly Eritrea--should be included in the political process. He explained that the regional actors have the most leverage on the rebel movements and are therefore the best suited to press for concessions. Agreeing that formal talks would make it difficult to attain consensus between the NCP and the non-signatories, Amun was receptive to the USG suggestion of a "shuttle diplomacy" approach led by the UN and AU.

¶4. (C) In a meeting with Kiir later on June 3, the First Vice President was clear that he envisioned Eritrea convening final status talks in Asmara and that the SPLM meeting in Southern Sudan would prepare the Darfur movements for this event. According to Kiir, the Eritrean and Sudanese Governments had agreed that Asmara would lead formal talks after its success in concluding the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement. Kiir rebuffed the suggestion that the idea of formal talks and a venue could be discussed at the meeting in Southern Sudan and was non-committal on the "shuttle diplomacy" approach. He recommended instead that the USG work to mend its bilateral relationship with Eritrea.

¶5. (C) On June 4, a Sudan-based representative of UN Envoy Jan Eliasson called Poloff from Asmara to report that Eritrea had proposed a "regional initiative" involving Chad, Libya, and Eritrea, which would culminate in final status talks in either Southern Sudan or Asmara. Though SPLM Taskforce Chairman Janda had just left Eritrea after a week of talks, Eritrean officials, including Yemane Gharaeeb, told the UN team that they were confused about the SPLM initiative and the goal of the SPLM meeting in Southern Sudan. Eritrea intended to focus its efforts on non-signatory leaders Sharif Harir, Khamis Abdullah, and Abdulla Yehya, who are all in Asmara. They dismissed Ahmed Abdul Shafi as having no popular support and did not mention Abdul Wahid al-Nur. The Eritreans said they had never received the UN/AU roadmap for the political process, but welcomed UN/AU cooperation on the regional initiative. (Note: Both Abdul Shafi and al-Nur

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spent several months in Asmara in 2006 after the Eritrean Government refused to issue exit permits. UN officials said they presented Eritrea with the draft roadmap two weeks ago, and the Norwegian Government provided the same during State Minister of Foreign Affairs Raymond Johansen's visit to Asmara last week. End note.)

¶6. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
POWERS